## VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2014 - 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

VRS WOODBURY OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

## **SESSION NOTES:**

## **Committee Objective**

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

**2014 Community Partner Members** (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Jeremy Gurney, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught and Robert Reedy

VRS Members: Jay Hancock, Becky Johnson, Lori Thorpe, and Kris Tone

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2014 Schedule: Jan 24, Mar 28, Apr 25, Jun 27, Sep 26, Oct 24, and Dec 5.

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## June 27, 2014 Session Objectives:

- \* Review policy and contract language for VRS purchased services and provide input on a draft Integration Assessment Work Tool
- \* Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers
- ★ Gather advisory perspectives on challenges and issues associated with interpreter services for vocational rehabilitation consumers

**June 27 2014 Attendees** (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Jay Hancock, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, Robert Reedy, Jan Thompson, Lori Thorpe, and Kris Tone

**Not in attendance:** Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Jeremy Gurney, and Josh Howie

Guest presenters: JoLynn Blaeser, John Fisher, Elise Knopf, and Anne Paulson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

# **Agenda Topics:**

- 1. Welcome / Overview
- 2. Update on MN Olmstead Plan Directives for VRS Purchased Services

Guest Presenter: Anne Paulson, VRS Rehabilitation Specialist

- Review of language developed by the VRS Policy Committee associated with VRS purchased services specific to integrated settings
- ii. Update on Professional / Technical Contracts language changes and timelines
- iii. Introduction to draft Integration Work Assessment Tool
- iv. Q&A / Discussion
- 3. VR Community Success Story June Storyteller Julie Peterschick
- 4. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
  - i. CRP Updates
  - ii. VRS Updates
- 5. Strategic Advisory Perspectives on Interpreter Services

Guests: JoLynn Blaeser, Director of Staff Development and Elise Knopf, Program Specialist Deaf/Hard of Hearing

6. Wrap Up/Adjourn

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# **Meeting Highlights:**

- The committee reviewed and offered input on VRS contract and form language associated with VRS purchased services specific to integrated settings in compliance with the Minnesota Olmstead Plan directives.
- The committee discussed current statewide and local experience with interpreter services for deaf and hard of hearing consumers seeking vocational rehabilitation services.

## **Next Steps:**

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- SEPTEMBER STORYTELLER: Amanda Jensen Stahl will bring the VR Community Success Story for September
- **NEXT MEETING:** Next meeting is Friday, Sept 26<sup>th</sup>. No meetings in July or August.

# **Welcome and Opening**

The committee approved the April 25, 2014 session notes.

## Update on MN Olmstead Plan Directives for VRS Purchased Services

Chris McVey began the dialogue with a refresher on the advisory committee's conversation at the March 28<sup>th</sup> meeting focused on Minnesota's Olmstead Plan directives regarding integrated settings and employment. Following the March meeting, Chris convened a small team of VRS staff specialists, including VRS Rehabilitation Specialist Anne Paulson, to review related VRS language and develop recommendations for updates to materials associated with VRS purchased services specific to integrated settings including the DEED VRS Professional and Technical Services Master Contract. The small team's work received review assistance from both the VRS Policy Committee as well as from CRP representatives Amanda Jensen Stahl, Robert Reedy and Heather Deuschtlaender.

Next Anne Paulson distributed a draft of the "Assessment Form for Integration". Anne is charged with working with the local provider to determine if outcomes can be counted as a successful outcome per the requirements for employment in the most integrated setting. Anne Paulson and Steve Scholl worked with the VRS Policy Committee to review the draft document.

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Kim Peck stated that the federal regulations require that VRS make determination on a job by job or service by service basis. VRS cannot assume that any job in the same setting is or is not eligible - there are no blanket approvals.

Anne and Chris walked through the draft form using an example of employment on a provider site. The committee also talked about applications with enclave situations. Gil Bessard talked about the contracts they have with different businesses in the community and how the form might be useful to determining the elements of an integrated setting. Kim said that with this new form, we'll likely need to work with the provider community and business to figure out what is needed procedurally to support the VR Program transformational direction moving from center based to community integrated settings for employment outcomes to be counted and supported by VR funding. The form is to be used for assessing the level of integration for any location where assessment is taking place.

The Policy Committee and the VRS management team have both been studying the language and definitions as it pertains to 'in the most integrated setting possible' which varies from the language used in the current federal regulations. VRS is also gathering input from RSA. The expectation is that integration is a more pure definition. Where challenges might occur is where there are crews and enclaves. Chris noted there are likely to be complex situations that will require collaboration on this assessment tool to figure out how to move the system forward and meet the spirit and law of Olmstead. The draft form is an attempt to be proactive in meeting the requirements as well as provide practical assistance to the community in guiding the system delivery and services.

Kim also talked about the variables associated with the number of providers and access for services. In some locations across the state, there may only be one or a few providers and shutting down services is not a good option. In many cases, VRS has been working to influence and assist providers for many years to shift from center based to more community based services.

Rachel Praught noted they are still getting requests for 'work adjustment training' and that many of situations that might have been allowed and funded in the past will likely no longer qualify. In some cases VR counselors are asking for that type of placement and Kim noted that we have further work to do to ensure all counselors understand that we no longer do that type of work anymore. Laura Bealey mentioned the fact that they receive a lot of referrals because people know about MRCI's existing crews at various businesses.

Rachel praised VRS for proposing this type of change in the assessment and said that she would anticipate something similar will likely need to be done by DHS and their waivers programs. Kris asked about the data of impact of those

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who use work adjustment training up front versus those who do not. She asked what we know about services with the strongest correlation with good outcomes. Kim responded that the tremendous number of variables makes it more complicated to identify true, clear correlations.

Kim talked about the value of working with providers to identify the core components of integrated settings and the current range of those services. She opened the discussion and Becky Bazzarre asked how many providers have inhouse work adjustment training programs around the state. Robert Reedy said they focus on asking the following types of questions: 'can this person benefit from services', 'what are the strengths', 'what are the support needs', and 'can this person sustain this?'. He shared that in their experience it is not uncommon that a one on one ratio is needed to support some of the most challenging consumer situations. This is frequently the case when the provider is trying to determine the 'ability to benefit' and see if the individual can demonstrate abilities in work situations. Kim asked about the potential of testing 'ability to benefit' in the community rather than in a non-integrated setting given the spirit of Olmstead is to start with community rather than start in the center.

There is further work required to address situations where today and/or recently VRS has referred people to non-integrated settings with the following challenges:

- a. significant criminal backgrounds
- b. significant behavioral issues

The committee reviewed and provided suggestions for improvements to the initial three page draft and recommended eliminating the points system concept from the draft. Chris McVey thanked the committee for their input and will take the inputs on the 'Assessment Form for Integration' back to the team at VRS.

Next, Anne distributed a draft of the proposed Professional and Technical Services Master Contract language changes and timelines. She asked the group to review the definition of integrated setting on page 14 of 20. The committee discussed potential issues associated with 'the exception of extended evaluation services' clause. Conversation included developing clearer, more consistent service categories and definitions for various services which is complicated by RSA and CARF language discrepancies e.g. Situational Assessments. Claire Courtney has developed a 'cross walk' between the two languages. Julie Peterschick said that new staff learn policies and procedures that are based on CARF language and they have concerns about potential confusion by staff with VRS/RSA language. Kim talked about removing CARF language as the framework for the new Professional and Technical Services contract and instead using RSA language with some notations back to CARF as helpful.

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Next steps were focused on creating a work group in conjunction with VRS policy whose work would include the following:

- a review of key language and terminology such as integrated settings, situational assessments, evaluation, trial work and work tryout, OJE/OJT, job shadow, extended evaluation, and EDS - Employee Development Services (CARF) = work adjustment training (VRS).
- an inquiry around what different entities call various different services in order to improve coding accuracy.
- examination of the rare situations where we provide services requested today in nonintegrated settings and what would it take to provide the services in an integrated setting instead.
- Work Group Interest: Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Dan Meyers (nominate staff person Jaime), Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Gil Bessard (nominate rep), Laura Bealey (rep), Rachel Praught (rep), and Becky Johnson.

Per the Minnesota Olmstead Plan, by October 2015 all services purchased by VRS will be in integrated settings.

# \* Committee member Julie Peterschick provided the June VR community partnership success story:

Julie shared the story of Paul... Paul and his siblings had a really tough situation. He worked for McDonalds for many years and he was late every day for seven years. His employer had a hair above the collar rule and Paul was very unhappy with that. Productive Alternatives helped him find a new job at a nearby casino. Paul has had many different jobs at the casino starting with washing dishes and now he is working in the buffet. He is almost self-sufficient with the help of extended employment support. Staff at Productive Alternatives have worked with Paul for over 20 years. Despite all the challenges around him and his family, Paul has been able to make it on his own. Now in his mid- 40's, he owns his home, maintains his yard, is proud of making his own way and has that pony tail his previous employer's policy never allowed!

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# **Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics**

# ❖ CRP updates:

- Julie Peterschick
  - Productive Alternatives has hired someone temporarily for a year to help review contracts. They have written a grant to help fund the work. They are working hard to determine what stays and what work goes. They are wrestling with the key questions: how do we transform our facility physically through construction and how do we modify the jobs we choose to keep so they are compatible with the work we choose to do. Targeting for work to be done by late October/early November.
  - Affirmative Business Enterprise effort: PA has a facility based program in Fergus Falls based on a historical regional treatment center which includes some clients who have been there since the program's inception. This is manufacturing contract work that they are trying to preserve as employment options by making it into a competitive option. This is a multiple year effort to make this transformation happen.
- Robert Reedy and Dan Meyers
  - Opportunity Partners and RISE, Incorporated are working together to explore a Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) placement partnership between their two organizations. They have started with people who have already learned about it and their goal is to get people talking and collaborating further. The collaborative effort was triggered by gathering people together from other organizations to put together teams for client centered services.
  - RISE is selecting an electronic record systems and documentation;
     completing Phase I and moving to RFI stage.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
  - Goodwill Easter Seals will be honoring our "Participant of the year" on July 24<sup>th</sup> at the St Paul office. Helen is one of our participants of the year and is a VRS consumer. Amanda will share her story in September. Helen came through EDS, went through placement and is now in extended employment. Two other individuals will also be honored.
  - IPS team presented at the May SRC meeting which was focused on IPS expansion
  - Fairview site will be relocating its retail to a location on University between Lexington and Hamline. Slated for 2015 for retail opening.

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 New 'Gina & Will's' concept targeted for teenager retail consumers in the heart of Dinkytown area. Next to the new Target concept focused on urban customers. Opening approximately August/September.

## Laura Bealey

- MRCI Mankato Laura's job has expanded due to DT&H increasing 325 slots and doubling the Shakopee site.
- Time intensive efforts continue on 245D forms and procedures
- They have expanded the Transition Youth skill building program
- IPS grant is continuing to expand
- Talking with more counties about Olmstead Plan and its implications
- o Attended the first meeting of the EE Rule Revision committee

## Gil Bessard

- Tasks Unlimited is updating their website
- Attempting to acquire a 15,000 square feet building and parking to be strategically placed as Nicollet urban plans unfold
- Received board approval to matching minimum wage to the federal minimum wage effective August 2014

## Rachel Praught

- Functional Industries Inc. broke ground on a new building and addition onto an existing building. They are offering additional services including horticultural, music therapy and pet therapy to expand offering beyond vocational services. December 15<sup>th</sup> is timeline to complete the construction.
- Rachel Praught has resigned and her last day will be July 17<sup>th</sup>. Other staffing changes include a transition youth services counselor who has resigned to accept a position at VRS.
- Anita Kavitz visited onsite to look at our new and expanded Extended Employment project. The visit was very helpful. Anita was open to suggestions for improving the parameters. She also walked through audit process and changes as well as work being done between VRS and DHS (245D).

# Becky Bazarre

- Lifetrack Resources is getting an electronic health records system.
- Happy to report an increase in referrals and getting fuller case loads.

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# DEED/VRS updates:

- Kim Peck, State VRS Director
  - WIA reauthorization update: The Senate passed HR103 this week and it is expected to pass the House. Likely to become law and RSA will then be working on implementing the regulations.
  - The new DEED Deputy Commissioner is Jeremy Hanson-Willis formerly worked in a few different roles with former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak including Chief of Staff.
  - 3. Our employment outcomes goal for Federal Fiscal Year 2014 is 2,763 statewide. On track to exceed the outcomes objectives for the year. Expect that categories 2, 3 and 4 will continue to be closed for some time unless additional funding is secured.
- Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director

Updates on Minnesota's VR Community program status and outcomes: Both activity and outcomes are coming in strong.

- 1. 2,120 this time employment outcomes; 2,243 employment outcomes same time this year better economy and job opportunities and improved partnerships.
- 2. Overall employment average wage is \$10.96 per hour. Always would like to see that wage increased to move to a livable wage. highest wage is a doctor who is making more than \$99 an hour. Range of weekly hours is between 10 to 40 hours.
- 3. 432 pending applications as of today with 13,080 in open cases (not including cases that have been closed)
- 4. according to the VRS Open Caseload Summary on June 27, 2014 there are 3,085 people in training status and 2,372 in 'Ready for employment' status.
- 5. As of 6/27/14, there are 732 people on the waiting list.
- Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships

As of August 1, VRS will be changing on how we authorize for PBAs. An email will be sent to all CRP/LUVs on Monday outlining the changes. VRS will authorize twice rather than once for placement services. First authorization will encumber \$2,300 for first two milestones (Signed Placement Plan and Job Hire) and second authorization for third milestone (Successful Placement) following a conversation with the placement specialist confirming the first shift has been completed. The changes are designed to reduce the encumbrances that are being locked up in order to free up the dollars for additional services. Last year, over \$25M was

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encumbered vs. \$18.8M that was eventually paid out from those encumbrances. RAMs/Sup2s have been notified of the changes and are working with their staffs to prepare for the changes. Chris is also working with the VRS placement specialists so that VRS staff are prepared to assist the CRP community.

- John Fisher, VRS Director of Public Affairs
  - Reporting back on the update from the VRS Community
     Outreach Team. We are reframing our work in terms of meeting
     the communication and information requirements under the
     Olmstead Plan.
  - 2. Active work assignments:
    - Archive & organize materials that already exist and as they are created for accessible resources by the full community
      - Created a 'SharePoint' site to gather materials and Community Outreach Team members have been loading their materials. At approximately 35 items posted. The archive will help us comply with Olmstead Plan implementation requirements
      - Thus far, is accessible only to those on the team.
         Ultimately will seek MnIT permission to make SharePoint archives available via the public website.
    - While creating a system wide video is still a longer term possibility due to the resources anticipated to do this, it is on the back burner while we focus on the other items.
    - John made two requests of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee on behalf of the VRS Community Outreach Team:
      - Please send out materials you think are helpful such as brochures and presentations that could be downloaded for use and adoption by the community. If you are not represented on the VRS Community Outreach Team than please send any materials directly to John Fisher otherwise please provide to your outreach team representative.
      - 2. The VRS Community Outreach Team needs 2-3 more members on the team who else can participate? Looking for members with

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Marketing/Communications/PR roles and background

 Kim added that the Olmstead Sub Cabinet is asking for examples of materials and will utilize the emerging archives to fulfill this.

# **Strategic Advisory Perspectives on Interpreter Services**

The focus of the afternoon dialogue was devoted to gathering provider perspectives regarding their experiences with interpreter services. Kim introduced guest presenters JoLynn Blaeser, VRS Director of Staff Development and Elise Knopf, VRS Program Specialist Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Kim Peck opened with a general overview of some of the major challenges related to interpreter resources for providers working with consumers including fiscal constraints and accessibility issues. Kim asked the advisory to share their experiences and perspectives on interpreter services.

### Focus Questions:

What is your experience with getting referral with consumers who are deaf and hard of hearing? and how are you dealing with those referrals?

- Julie: received a transition student referral with an interpreter. ongoing needs like 2 hour minimum and timing availability within the interpreter's schedule. In rural setting (Fergus Falls), there not a lot of interpreters. services require a lot of coordination.
- Amanda: variables around when VRS pays and when CRP pays as well as when the consumer starts working when does the employer pay
- Elise: remote video interpreter services are available at a slightly higher cost however the technology is not consistent across the state
- Kim: referenced the language in the Work Plan on page 14 of 20.
- Dan: the \$1,000 funding amount does not go that far to support services; we are not able to take some consumers when there is a high risk that we will lose money on the business.
- Kim: MEC can we expand the offering and still provide informed choice?
   MEC and a couple of other providers are developing the capacity for services but they are in the metro. Do we have any idea of the numbers of consumers in greater MN who are unable to access services? what are the unmet needs?

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- Elise: we do not have firm numbers however we hear from some communities that rather than waiting for services they just don't seek services with VRS. They may eventually come to VRS after several bad employment experiences. If the counselor is fluent or has received some training about serving the deaf and hard of hearing population than the clients feel more connected and that the counselor is working on their behalf. It is a low incidence population so it doesn't make sense to make it a requirement for all counselors. Some states have hired their own interpreters who travel around the state to provide interpreter services e.g. Connecticut is an example of a state doing this however they are both geographically small in size and wealthy in funding.
- Becky: we need different types of interpreters depending on what services our consumers need - occupational/job coach and sign vs. an interpreter during the initial meetings
- Elise Knopf: in rural areas where it is hard to find an interpreter, it's hard to think about finding an interpreter plus other skills needed for the individual consumer. we are constantly trying to be creative in how we provide support to greater MN
- Laura Bealey: differences in expectation for interpreter services makes it difficult to know the risk; can we limit the services amount expectation with a standard PBA?
- JoLynn Blaeser: sometimes a standard interpreter service/referral may not be sufficient because the interpreter also needs to have skills in dealing with the consumers' other challenges impacting employment
- Becky Bazzarre: what are the options with technology and how it might help with this work?
- Elise Knopf: there are lots of different types of software and tools available including cell phones and laptops. There can be technology complications based on the work environment e.g. factory floor vs. office setting. We have used videoconferencing to help other MN locations like Duluth, Bemidji and Mankato. It saves on mileage and travel expenses. Approximately \$1.50-5.00 a minute for the cost of a meeting. VRS has a list of names and companies that are providing these types of services
- Kris Tone: our VRS office has one counselor who serves cases in 11 counties. challenges include situations where the counselor arranges and hires interpreter and gets to location however if consumer doesn't show than the expense is still experienced

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- Kim: There are legislative efforts looking at new policy language for monies separate from other competitive programs in an effort to recognize the unique needs for the deaf and hard of hearing population. If interpreter services are a challenge, the community needs to step up and provide support to MEC, Lifetrack, Mary Hartnett and RISE who have been doing the heavy lifting thus far. Providers need to identify the extent there is a significant need for more resources to deliver the services ADA requires for both metro and greater Minnesota. If we know it's a problem then as a vocational rehabilitation community, we must seek a solution to address these needs. VRS cannot do this absent the voice and collaboration of the greater vocational rehabilitation community.
- Becky: we're trying to figure out the funding estimate to meet the needs however we need help gathering information on the unmet needs across the state
- Kim: this committee can help to identify the unmet needs along with the
  potential strategies to address and the pool of money required to meet
  those needs. Some of the strategies that we have already talked about
  include technologies ideas, additional training, and a pool of money for
  providers to request special support for more resource intensive work.
- Becky: to make an impact for the next legislative session, we would need to convene pretty quickly and work to more fully identify individuals with hearing loss and the difficulties they encounter with accessing services.
- Elise: VRS can connect CRPs to resources that can provide different methods and approaches for accommodations. We need to include other CRPs across the state.
- Julie: we don't get a lot of referrals today however if people aren't even coming for services because they don't think they can be served that means we could have a potentially large unmet need.
- Kim: we can look to the commission and DHS- DHHSD to identify the demographics; we can study the complaints to better understand the unmet needs and work with providers on ideas to better meet the needs
- Elise: interpreter service issues also impact the Centers for Independent Living
- Kim: in summary, as we clarify the needs, the constraints and work to
  utilize the policy and plan to identify the resources it will take to develop a
  statewide network, representatives from this advisory committee can join
  forces with the commission and DHS-DHHSD to develop a model and
  projections in response to the request from Senator Mahoney.

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# Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- Olmstead is driving an intensive comprehensive review of policy and contracts for VRS purchased services. VRS is committed to working with providers to identify the core components of integrated settings and the current range of those services to actively transform the system in alignment with the Olmstead directives around competitive employment in 'the most integrated setting'. The creation of an 'Assessment Form for Integration' and the updates to the DEED Professional and Technical Services Master Contract are two examples of how these directives will be implemented throughout the system.
- The advisory committee has decided to create a work group in conjunction with VRS policy to undertake a review of key language and terminology such as integrated settings, situational assessments, evaluation, and trial work and work tryout. The work group was also asked to study the rare situations where we provide services requested today in nonintegrated settings and offer recommendations on strategies to provide the services within an integrated setting.
- There is community unity around the growing need for resources to support the delivery system for deaf and hard of hearing interpreter services. VRS understands the dilemma that exists for providers in terms of interpreter services resources and we believe the vocational rehabilitation community has a time sensitive opportunity to make the case for greater resources to make a positive impact in addressing the unmet needs across the state.
- With the next legislative funding session approaching, Senator Mahoney has requested a figure by August 1, 2014 for an estimated cost to address the state's needs in this area. Now is the time for diligent preparation and action to make progress in interpreter services for this population of Minnesotans with disabilities in deafness and hard of hearing.